

ST. LOUIS ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS QUICK FACTS

St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV) is an arthropod-borne virus (arbovirus) that is primarily transmitted in Indiana by mosquitoes in the genus *Culex*. While most people who become infected with SLEV do not develop any symptoms, some people can develop severe inflammation in the brain, spinal cord, or other parts of the nervous system. Please visit the ISDH St. Louis encephalitis virus page for more information (<https://www.in.gov/isdh/28259.htm>).

TRANSMISSION

SLEV is transmitted in Indiana by mosquitoes in the genus *Culex*. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected wild birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread SLEV to people and other mammals. Once infected, people and other mammals are “dead-end hosts,” which means that they do not pass the virus on to other biting mosquitoes.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Most people (about 99%) infected with SLEV do not develop any symptoms.

Some people (about 1%) develop a fever and other symptoms. Signs and symptoms of SLEV disease usually appear within 5 – 15 days of a bite from an infected mosquito. The onset of symptoms is usually abrupt, with fever, headache, dizziness, nausea, and malaise. Signs and symptoms intensify over a period of several days to a week. Some people will spontaneously recover after this period; others develop signs of central nervous system infections. SLEV disease is generally milder in children than in older adults. Almost 90% of elderly people with SLEV disease develop encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). SLEV disease is fatal in approximately 5-15% of cases. The risk of fatal disease increases with age.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of SLEV disease is based upon the patient’s signs and symptoms and appropriate laboratory testing. If you think that you have SLEV disease, contact your health care provider.

TREATMENT

No specific medication is available to treat SLEV disease. People with severe illness usually require hospitalization, supportive care, and/or rehabilitation.

PREVENTION



Indiana State
Department of Health
Epidemiology Resource Center

The best way to prevent SLEV disease is to avoid mosquito bites. Please see our mosquito bite prevention page (<https://www.in.gov/isdh/28007.htm>) for more information.

For more information about SLEV disease, please visit the CDC West Nile virus website (<https://www.cdc.gov/sle/index.html>).

STATISTICS

SLEV disease is rare in Indiana. No cases were reported from 2013-2017. For more information about infectious disease in Indiana, please visit our annual report pages (<https://www.in.gov/isdh/28259.htm>).

National statistics for SLEV disease can be found at the CDC Statistics and Maps webpage (<https://www.cdc.gov/sle/technical/epi.html>).

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